did not produce the desired result. On the other hand, the nurses are alleging that the Minister is responsible for the present crisis as he did not execute the earlier Government's decision to introduce the camel-coloured uniform. They have threatend to go on an indefinite strike from 2nd December, 1996 if their demand is not acceded to in time. In the present circumstances, due to the Minister's indifference. I would like the Prime Minister to intervene in the matter and avoid a situation which may lead to death of patients struggling for life in the hospitals. Thank you.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL (RAJASTHAN): Madam, are we coming to the Listed Business?

(*Interruptions*)

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): I am going to call Dr. Biplab Dasgupta. (*Interruptions*). He has been permitted. This is regarding the Comapanies (Amendment) Bill, 1996.

THE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1996

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA (WEST BENGAL): Madam, may I request the hon. Minister of Finance not to allow the Companies (Amendment) Bill, 1996 to be considered and passed today? It is a very important Bill. It incorporates many technical issues. It also incorporates the issues which have a bearing on our corporate sector, our employees, our depositors and so on. It is a very, very important Bill which requires a lot of consideration. Unfortunately, we are not prepared because of a number of reasons. Number one, it was never discussed in the Business Advisory Committee. Last week, there was no meeting of the Business Advisory Committee. No time had been allotted for this. Only yesterday, I found that the Bill had figured somewhere. I asked for a copy of the Bill. The Bill was not available with them. The Bill was sent to us on 10th September; I do not know why some of us did not get the copies. Neither Mr. Ashok Mitra nor I got the copies; maybe, others had got it. I also came to know that this Bill was referred to two Standing Committees—the Standing Committee on Law and the Standing Commitee on Home Affairs. I am surprised that it was not sent to the appropriate Standing Committee, i.e. the Finance. I do not know why. In any case, on this Bill, through the Standing Committee process, they have made certain recommendations. We have not had the time so far to study those recommendations and to see whether these have been incorporated into the Bill. From a cursory look of the Bill, it seems that they have not been taken into account because the copy which I have been given, the one which was circulated on 10th September .... (*interruption*) ...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): But what is the objection?

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: My objection is this. We did not have the time to prepare for it because it was suddenly imposed on us. So, I would suggest let this Bill not be considered today and let it be taken up next week. By then, we will be able to go through the Bill properly and we will also be able to go through the Report of the Standing Committee and come to our judgment on that particular Bill, and it should not be steamrolled through this session, by considering and passing it today. My request to the Minister is, please do not press for the discussion today and consider it next week.

SHRI GURUDA DAS GUPTA (WEST BENGAL): Madam, I have no objection if the Bill is passed during this session, but my objection is, since we did not have enough time to consider the Bill, to look into the provisions and also to find out what more should be done, I think, the hon. Minister would kindly agree to his suggestion, that it may be deffered. He may kindly agree to our

suggestion to defer it for the day; it can be taken up next week when we will be in a position to discuss it in a much better way, after having looked into the paragraphs, sections and amendments that the hon. Minister thinks should be introduced.

Madam, the point is that this Bill should have been appropriately discussed. The appropriate Committee for this should have been the Finance Committee. It has never been sent there. I do not hold the present Finance Minister responsible for it, but they have, anyway, picked up a trend or a culture or a tradition of going in for an amendment in a slipshod way. I think, a little more attention is to be paid. May be, it has been given by the hon. Minister; but not by his colleagues in the House. Therefore, to do justice to this subject, I would most humbly request my hon. friend, Mr. Chidambaram, to kindly agree to its postponement and to get it listed next week when we will be able to discuss it in a much better way.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL (Rajasthan): Madam Vice-Chairman, without elaborating further my objections to the consideration of this Bill today, I join my two friends who have spoken earlier to me and say that this is a very important measure and this is based on the Sachar Committee Report which was set up in 1977 by the then Janata Government. Some amendments were carried out in 1985 on the basis of the Sachar Committee Report. Some amendments were made in the Companies Law in 1988, and then a Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in 1993, which is still pending. That 1993 Bill is still pending, as mentioned in the Statement of Objects and Reasons. So, I think that the hon. Finance Minister will be good enough to agree to the deferment of a debate on the consideration and passing of this Bill today. It can be taken up on Monday. As rightly pointed out, no time was allotted by the Business Advisory Committee, as I recollect. But apart from the technical objections, there are practical problems also. We want a fruitful debate and our fruitful contribution to this debate. Then I think that it will be more appropriate if you take it up on Monday or Tuesday, whichever date suits you. I think that we can take up another business which is listed here. I join my friends in their request to the hon. Finance Minister that he may agree to the deferment of this Bill, not on technical grounds, but on the ground that no time has ben allotted by the Business Advisory Committee. It sometimes so happens that we agree or we acquiesce in not getting it done there, but even then, I think that he will consider this request and postpone it for Monday or Tuesday, whichever date is convenient to him.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): To set the record straight, the Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on the 10th of September, 1996, which is the date on the Bill. It was circulated to hon. Members by letter dated 8th September, 1996. It was referred to the Department-related Standing Committee on 12th September, 1996 and the Committee's Report was presented on 26th of November, 1996. Therefore, I don't think that there is any objection to the Bill being discussed now. If the Minister is agreeable, it can be postponed.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Madam, one point emerges. True, the Bill was circulated in September. The committee submitted its Report in November, 1996. Then how has it been possible to incorporate the suggestions? If the Ministry has rejected all the suggestions, that is okay. It is up to them.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SMT. JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): Mr. Gurudas Das Gupta, you know that the Report of the Standing Committee is not binding on the Government.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: I

know that, Madam. If the Minister is so pleased to reject all the recommendations, he can do it. I don't know. If the Bills are sent to the Committees, it is open to the Ministries or Ministers to take into consideration the recommendations. I am afraid the recommendations have not been looked into. At least the timeframe does not suggest that.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SMT. JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): I am sure he will reply to that concern of yours. So, I am not able to agree with the hon. Members that the Bill should be postponed, unless the Government is willing to do it. From the Chair I will not be able to vote because there is no point by which I can hold that it should be postponed.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: We have not requested the Chair to postpone. We have never requested. We have only requested the hon. Finance Minister to convey, through you, that the Bill be postponed.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Our request is directed to the Finance Minister.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): Madam Vice-Chairman, what can I say, if my colleagues want more time to read the Bill or to read the Report of the Standing Committee? All I wish to point out is that the amendments were introduced pursuant to paragraph 43 of my Budget Speech where I listed the five issues which require urgent amendment to the Companies Act. In the Budget debate we discussed these issues and nobody took any real exception to any of these issues. In fact, they were widely welcomed. The Committee has given its Report. I have great respect for the Committee except that the system does not allow me to convince the Committee that the Bill, as drafted, is a correct Bill. Therefore, I will, of course, take into account the recommendations of the Committee as I have and I will try to persuade the House that the Bill, as drafted, is the correct approach to the issue. If this House shares the sense of the Committee on one recommendation, the rest of them are administrative recommendations which we have taken into account, I will not press that clause. But if the House agrees with me and I am able to persuade the House that the draft Bill is the correct one notwithstanding the Report of the Committee, I am entitled to ask the House to pass the Bill as I have drafted it. But if the hon. Members feel that they have not had enough time either to read the Bill or to read the Report of the Committee for one reason or the other, I cannot stand in the way. But I would insist with great respect that this Bill be given time. I need to have it passed. I need to have it passed in the Lok Sabha. That is why I introduced it on the last day of the previous session. This is an important Bill. There are other Bills which claim priority. I am here in obedience to the list of business which says that it will be taken up at 2 o'clock. Therefore, I would urge, if necessary, you may have to sit on Wendesday a little longer and co-operate with me and pass it.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: We are not opposed to the merits. We want more time to read it. You can take it up on any date convenient to you.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: I have no objection. Then you kindly fix the date except Tuesday next week.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Could it be fixed for next Wednesday?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): No.

That is for the Business Advisory Commitee to decide.

SHRI ASHOK MITRA (West Bengal): I have been hunting for a copy of the Report of the Standing Committee

since morning. If you could kindly help us... *(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): I am sure the office will do that.

SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Okey.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Madam, a copy of the Standing Committee Report may be made available to us and, as requested by the Minister, it should not be listed on Tuesday.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: The Business Advisory Committee would have to be told about the sense of the House and that they will have to find for this Bill next week. That is the understanding.

THE APPRENTICES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1995

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): Madam, I beg to move:

> "that the Bill further to amend the Apprentices Act, 1961 be taken into consideration."

As the hon. Members are aware, the Apprentices Act was enacted in 1961 with the objective of regulating programmes of apprenticeship in industry for imparting practical training. The Act was amended in 1973 to bring within its purview the training of graduate engineers, diploma holders in engineering/technology as graduate/technician apprentices. It was further amended in 1986 to bring within its purview the training of technician (vocational) apprentices from the products of the 10+2 vocational stream of education. In reply to a question raised by the former Member of Parliament, Shri Jagdambi Prasad Yadav, and during subsequent discussions in this House, an assurance was given by the former Union Labour Minister in the 139th Session of Rajya Sabha on 20th August, 1986 for taking up a proposal for bringing comprehensive amendment of the Apprentices Act.

In order to undertake the review, suggestions were invited from the Central Government, State Governments, industries, establishments, employers' and employees' representatives. The Central Apprenticeship Council, CAC, the apex tripartite statutory body set up under the Apprentices Act, considered these suggestons during its various meetings and constituted two Working Groups and a Task Force from amongst its members to make suggestions on the proposed amendments. The CAC, in its 22nd meeting on 30.1.1990, accepted the recommendations of the Working Groups and the Task Force after due deliberations.

Briefly, the amendments proposed are as follows. (1) Amendment of the definition of establishment, as given under Section 2(g) and also to add the definition of 'Worker' under Section 2(r). (2) Amendment of Section 7 of the Act by adding an additional clause to give benefit of training undergone with a former employer. (3) Amendment of Section 8(3) of the Act by addition of a proviso, to provide flexibility to the employers to adjust the number of apprentices in different trades. (4) Amendment of Section 9(8) (a) (i) and (ii) by lowering the limit of 500 workers to 250 for sharing the recurring cost of training including the cost of stipend. (5) Amendment of Section 11 of the Act to ensure availability of adequate and qualified instructional staff for imparting practical and theoretical training and for providing facilities for trade test of apprentices by the employer in their establishments. (6) Amendment of Section 33 of the Act regarding delegation of powers to the Deputy Apprenticeship Advisers and above for filing complaints regarding offences committed under the Act and the